

# Exercise for the Elderly

## Is it safe for me to exercise?

It is safe for most adults older than 65 years to exercise. Even patients with chronic illnesses such as heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, and arthritis, can exercise safely. Many of these conditions are improved with exercise. If you are not sure if exercise is safe for you or if you are currently inactive, ask your doctor.

## How do I get started?

It is important to wear loose, comfortable clothing and well-fitting, sturdy shoes. Your shoes should have a good arch support, and an elevated and cushioned heel to absorb shock.

If you are not already active, you should begin slowly. Start with exercises that you are already comfortable doing. Starting slowly makes it less likely that you will injure yourself. Starting slowly also helps prevent soreness from "overdoing" it. The saying "no pain, no gain" is not true for older or elderly adults. You do not have to exercise at a high intensity to get most health benefits.

Walking, for example, is an excellent activity to start with. As you become used to exercising, or if you are already active, you can slowly increase the intensity of your exercise program.

## What type of exercise should I do?

There are several types of exercise that you should do. You will want to do some type of aerobic activity for at least 30 minutes on most, and preferably, all days of the week. Examples are walking, swimming, and bicycling. You should also do resistance, or strength training two days per week.

Warm up for five minutes before each exercise session. Walking slowly and stretching are good warm-up activities. You should also cool down with more stretching for five minutes when you finish exercising. Cool down longer in warmer weather.

Exercise is only good for you if you are feeling well. Wait to exercise until you feel better if you have a cold, flu, or other illness. If you miss exercise for more than two weeks, be sure to start slowly again.

## When should I call my doctor?

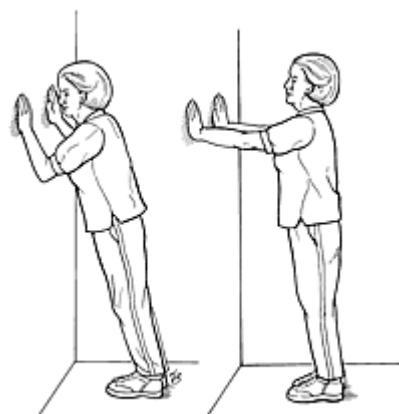
If your muscles or joints are sore the day after exercising, you may have done too much. Next time, exercise at a lower intensity. If the pain or discomfort persists, you should talk to your doctor. You should also talk to your doctor if you have any of the following symptoms while exercising:

- Chest pain or pressure
- Trouble breathing or excessive shortness of breath
- Light-headedness or dizziness
- Difficulty with balance
- Nausea

### What are some specific exercises I can do?

The following page shows some simple strength exercises that you can do at home. Each exercise should be done 8 to 10 times for two sets. Remember to:

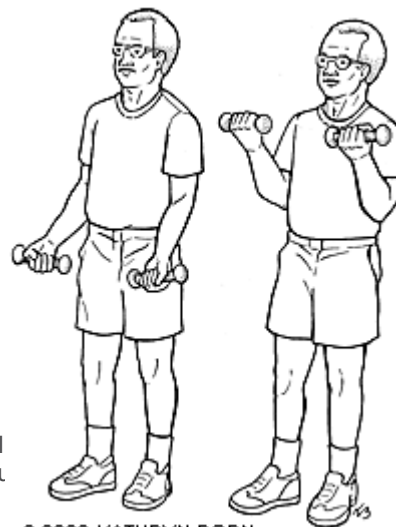
- Complete all movements in a slow, controlled fashion.
- Don't hold your breath.
- Stop if you feel pain.
- Stretch each muscle after your workout.



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1. Place hands flat against the wall
2. Slowly lower body to the wall. Push back up.

**PICTURE 1. Wall push-ups.**



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Hold a weight in each hand with your arms

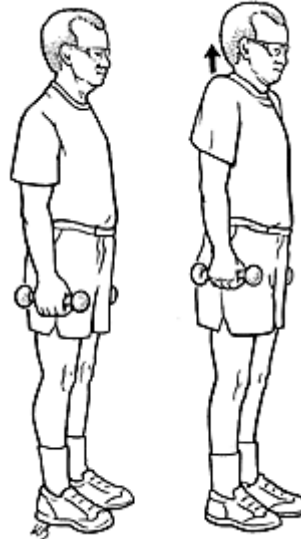
**PICTURE 3. Biceps curl.**



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Begin by sitting in the chair. Lean slightly

**PICTURE 2. Chair squats.**



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Hold a weight in each hand with your arms

**PICTURE 4. Shoulder shrugs.**

This handout provides a general overview on this topic and may not apply to everyone. To find out if this handout applies to you and to get more information on this subject, talk to your family doctor.

Visit [familydoctor.org](http://familydoctor.org) for information on this and many other health-related topics.

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